Rashi on Habakkuk
רש"י על חבקוק
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Rashi on Habakkuk

Chapter 1

Verse 1

The prophecy Heb. הַמַּשָּׂא. The burden of prophecy - what he bore and received by the Holy Spirit. [after Jonathan]

Verse 2

O Lord! How long -He foresaw with the Holy Spirit that Nebuchadnezzar was destined to be the ruler of the world and to cause trouble for Israel, as the matter is stated in his prophecy (1:6): “For behold, I raise up the Chaldeans, etc.” He was complaining for this.
I cry out to You of violence I mention before You the violence committed against me, and You do not save me.

Verse 3

iniquity plunder and violence.
and look upon mischief You look upon this mischief, but You do not help.
and the one who bears quarrel and strife endures And this wicked man who bears quarrel and strife, will live, remain in existence, and prosper.
endures He who bears quarrel and strife will endure. So did Jonathan render.

Verse 4

Therefore Torah is slackened Because of this, that Israel sees his [the wicked man’s] success, the Torah will slacken and leave them; and they [Israel] will obey him [the wicked man] and prostrate themselves before the idol in the valley of Dura.
and justice does not go out forever I.e., the true decision of the Law.
surrounds surrounds, as in (Ps. 22:13): “Strong bulls of Bashan have surrounded me (כִּתְּרוּנִי).”

Verse 5

You shall not believe when it is told When this is told to you, that I am setting up the Chaldeans, the people that did not deserve to be created, as it is written (Isa. 23:13): “This people has never been.” They are one of three things whose creation God regrets, and now [they] will rise, and [they] will be bitter, and [they will be] impetuous to run and to march to the breadth of the lands of all the nations.

Verse 6

Verse 7

from themselves their judgment and their burden shall emanate From them are judges; from them are kings, who cast a burden and a fear upon all. their judgment joustice in O.F:

Verse 8

and their riders shall increase Heb. וּפָשׁוּ.

Verse 9

come to commit violence to plunder and to spoil.
the eagerness of their faces an expression like (Gen. 24: 17) "Give me to swallow, (הַגְמִיאִינִי) I pray you" and (Job 39:24) "He swallows (יְגַמֶּה) the earth." He runs swiftly - in a short time a distance of a day's plowing - as though he had swallowed and drunk the earth that is before him. Here, too, the swallowing of their faces; the swallowing, the longing of their faces resembles the east wind, the fiercest of the winds. So did Jonathan render this.

Verse 10

And they shall mock the kings shall mock them. Every expression of קַלָסָה is an expression for the speech of those speaking about another; some [of these speeches] are for good, and some for bad - parledic in O.F.
a laughingstock like שְׂחוֹק, laughter, like מִשְׁמָר, a watch, and מִסְתָּר, a hiding place.
He shall scoff at every fortress If his enemy is in a strong fortress, he scoffs at him.
he piles up earth upon it with his many armies, each one carrying a load of earth. It [the pile] is before the wall as a high mound, and they [the Chaldeans] battle from upon it. This is called שְׁפִיכַת סוֹלְלָה, pouring a siege mound (cf. Isa. 37:33), for all of them are translated into Aramaic: וְיִצְבּוֹר עֲלָהּ תִּלֵּיתָא, and he piled upon it a filling. This is an expression of Milo, for in the city of David there was a high mound, and they would battle upon it. Atop the mound was built a tower whose slant was inclined to the sides, and around its base was a low wall to prevent the earth from falling.

Verse 11

Then a spirit goes further Then, when they see their way prospering, a spirit of guilt goes further and passes over them. Now what is the spirit? this strength they attribute to their god This strength they attribute to their god, and they say, "My god acquired all this wealth for me." Says the prophet, "Now, You, why should You remain silent to all this?"

Verse 12

Are You not from everlasting, O Lord, my God, my Holy One? Who shall not die. Now, the reason it is written לֹא נָמוּת we shall not die, is that it is one of the emendations of the scribes in Scripture, by which Scripture euphemizes. Likewise, (Mal. 1:13) "And you sadden it." And so are many of them [these euphemisms] explained in Sifre (Num. 10:35). According to the

emendation of the scribes, this is its explanation: Are you not my God from everlasting, my Holy One? Do not deliver us into their hands to die. O Lord, You have ordained them for judgment I know that You have set this one [Nebuchadnezzar] up only to judge those who rebel against You. In any case, why should all this come about? Is it not so that...

Verse 13

[You are] of eyes too pure to behold evil?
gaze like וּלְהַבִּיט, and to gaze upon iniquity.
one more righteous than he that he will blind the eyes of Zedekiah (II Kings 25:7).

Verse 14

And You have made man before this wicked man - free as the fish of the sea, which anyone who wishes may catch.

Verse 15

He takes all of them up with the fishhook This wicked man takes up all people with his fishhook.
catches them an expression of (Prov. 6:8) "Gathers (אָגְרָה) her food in the harvest," and (Joel 1: 17) "Granaries (מַמְּגֻרוֹת) are demolished."

Verse 16

he sacrifices to his net To his god, for he says that it conquers everyone before him.
through them This is similar to בהם, because of them.
a fatling fat.

Verse 17

Because of this does he arm himself with his net There are many interrogative forms that are affirmative, e.g., (I Sam. 2:27) "Did I appear?" concerning Eli, and (II Sam. 15:27) "Do you see?" Here, too: Does it appear in Your eyes that because of this he prospers every time, in that he arms himself with his net over everyone and to hunt game? arms himself As in (Gen. 14:14) "And he armed (וַיָּרֶק) his trained men" and (Ps. 35:3): "Arm yourself (הָרֵק) with a spear." He arms himself with his net.

Chapter 2

Verse 1

On my watch I will stand Habakkuk dug a circular hole, stood within it, and said, "I will not budge from here until I hear what He will say to me concerning this, my question why He looks and sees the prosperity of a wicked man."
and what I will reply to those who come to contend with me.
when I am reproved mon aprobement in O.F.; the reproach one addresses to me. when I am reproved For they reprove me to my face that one should criticize the Divine standard of justice.

Verse 2

And the Lord answered me and said: Write for yourself the vision that will be revealed to you, and explain it well on the tablets so that one may read it swiftly. And this is the vision that you shall write.

Verse 3

For there shall be another vision for the appointed time A prophet shall yet arise at the end of the years, to whom a vision shall be revealed concerning when the appointed time shall be for the downfall of Babylon and the redemption of Israel.
and He shall speak of the end The speech that He shall say to him concerning the end of Babylon, (Jer. 29:10) "For at the completion of seventy years of Babylon." וְיָפֵחַ is an expression of speech; and there are many uses of this root with similar meaning in the Book of Proverbs. Since speech is only the wind emanating from the mouth, he [the writer of the Scriptures] calls it פִּיחַ, blowing, and he calls it wind, e.g., (Ps. 33:6) "And with the wind of His mouth all their host."
and it shall not fail; though it tarry it shall not fail to come, though that appointed time may take long to come. wait for it for...; it shall not delay at all after the seventy years. This clause can also be explained to mean: though he tarry, meaning the prophet Jeremiah. Jonathan renders: the prophecy is written and explained in the Book of the Torah. He translated כְּתוֹב as כְּתִיב. It has already been alluded to in the Torah (Lev. 26:34): "Then shall the land placate [God concerning] its Sabbaths." Israel sinned by violating seventy Sabbatical Years, in which they did not release the land, and, corresponding to them, they were exiled therefrom for seventy years. And so it is stated in II Chronicles (36:21): "Until the land placated its Sabbaths; all the days it lay waste, it rested to complete seventy years." And so you find in Ezekiel (4:5): "And I have given you the years of their iniquity according to the number of days, three hundred and ninety days... (verse 6) I gave you a day for a year." And Scripture says (verse 4): "And you lie on your left side, etc." You are found saying that Israel provoked God for three hundred and ninety years until the Ten Tribes were exiled, and the tribe of Judah sinned for forty years, and from the time the Ten Tribes were exiled until the destruction of Jerusalem are the twenty-two years of Manasseh. The rest of Manasseh's years were spent in repentance, for it is stated concerning him (II Kings 21:2f.) "And he did what was evil, etc.,... as Ahab... had made." Therefore we count Manasseh's evil years according to the number of Ahab's years, and he reigned for twenty-two years. With two years of his son Amon's reign, and eleven of Jehoiakim's, and eleven of Zedekiah's, the evil years total forty-six, and this prophecy was said to Ezekiel in the fifth year of Zedekiah. In any case, we find the time of their sinning four hundred and thirty years, for after this prophecy they tarried there six years. [I.e., the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained in the land for six more years] In four hundred years, there are eight Jubilee Years, and in every Jubilee cycle there are seven Release Years, making a total of fifty-six Release Years and eight years consecrated as Jubilee Years making all together sixty-four. In thirty-six years there are five Release Years, totaling sixty-nine consecrated years, and this final Jubilee year is also counted in the number, since it was not completed because of their iniquity. And here, this is what the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Habakkuk: A vision is already written in the Torah, but it is sealed. You write and explain on the tablets, for a vision of this appointed time will yet be revealed.
and He shall speak It is an expression [denoting] speech, and there are many similar instances throughout the book of Proverbs. Since speech is merely wind that goes out of the mouth, it is called פיח or רוח, wind, as in (Psalms 33:6) "and with the breath of His mouth, all their host."

Verse 4

Behold, it is puffed up The soul of the wicked man is always wroth and full of desire, longing to swallow and never satisfied. עֻפְלָה is an expression of insolence, as in (Num. 14:44) "And they acted insolently (וַיַּעְפִּילוּ)"; and (Isa. 32:14) "Rampart (עֹפֶל) and tower."
his soul is not upright within him His spirit is not satisfied within him, and he does not say, "What I have already acquired is enough." Therefore, retribution shall come upon him.
but the righteous shall live by his faith Jeconiah the king, whom this wicked man is destined to exile - his righteousness shall stand for him, and on the day this one is cast out of his grave, Evil-merodach shall raise Jehoiachin's head and place his throne above the thrones of the kings.

Verse 5

And surely he, whom wine betrays And surely, when Belshazzar, this one's grandson, comes; the one whose wine shall betray him for he drank as much wine as a thousand (Dan. 5:1).
who widened Nebuchadnezzar.
a haughty man whose dwelling shall not remain [Belshazzar's] dwelling and his residence shall not remain in existence, for he was haughty and said, with the counsel of the wine, to bring the vessels of the Temple; and he drank with them. That shall cause him to be slain, and the seed of Nebuchadnezzar to be destroyed, for a haughty man is a scorner; he shall not have a dwelling. Neither he nor his dwelling shall remain in existence.
his desire like the nether-world to attain all his desire with a full heart.
and he is like death Like the angel of death, who is not sated with slaying. So is this one not sated with all his possessions.

Verse 6

Shall not all these whom he [Belshazzar] collected for himself to pay himself tribute?
take up a parable against him and a figure they shall take up in their mouth an expression of a riddle concerning him. against him like עָלָיו, upon him.
And he shall say The one who says the figure of the riddle
Woe to him who increases what is not his! This is the figure: Woe to him who increases wealth and kingdom, and it is not his, for the kings of Media shall come and take everything.
How long? will he continue to increase when he is only loading upon himself a burden of iniquity like a beam of mud? עָב is an expression of a heavy beam, as we find concerning the Tabernacle of Ezekiel (Ezek. 41: 25): "And a wooden beam (וְעָב)," and (ibid. 26) "The casings of the House and the beams (וְהָעֲבִים)."

Verse 7

awaken like וְיָקִיצוּ

Verse 8

Since you have cast away many nations You have cast them and thrown them from their place.
all remaining peoples shall cast you away The nations that escaped.

because of the blood of man As revenge for the blood of Israel, called ‘man,’ as it is said (Ezek. 34:31): “You are man.”
and the violence done to the land The land of Israel.
the city Jerusalem.

Verse 9

Woe to him who gains evil gains Who robs money which is harmful to him.
for his house To build a house for himself
to place his nest on high As it is written in the Book of Daniel (4:27): “Is this not the great Babylon, which I built up as a royal residence with the might of my power, etc.?” At the time this statement emanated from his mouth, [Nebuchadnezzar] was driven away from men, as it is said (ibid. 28): “When this word was still in the king’s mouth, etc.”

Verse 10

With this matter, you advised shame for your house For you advised to cut off many peoples, and you caused a loss for yourself.
to cut off an expression of stripping and peeling, as in (Lev. 14: 43) “Scraping the house.”
and you have sinned against your life As in (Prov. 20:2) “He who provokes him sins against his life.” He sins to lose his life; forsfait sa arme in O.F. he forfeits his soul.

Verse 11

For a stone For the stones that you stole shall cry from the wall.
and a chip of the wood shall answer it [the stone]. It shall answer aloud the stone that is opposite it; hence both of them cry.
and a chip shall answer it from a beam Jonathan renders: וְשִׁפָּא מִגּוֹ מָרִישָׁא. שִׁפָּא is an expression of a chip; שִׁפָּאִים in the language of the Sages; dokldours in O.F. - chips. שִׁירֵי מָ is a beam.

Verse 12

Verse 13

Behold, is it not from the Lord that the retribution has been requited to the perpetrators of wickedness?
And peoples shall toil until they are sated with fire When My wrath, which is like fire, shall come upon them until they are sated. בְּדֵי אֵשׁ - Asec in O.F.; enough; assez in modern French.

Verse 14

Verse 15

Woe to him who gives his friend to drink wine; and into that drink he adds and gathers his venom upon him, and also makes him [his friend] drunk with his venom. All this he does... in order to gaze upon their nakedness Upon their exposure, to see their nakedness. This is the wicked Nebuchadnezzar, who would give the kings wine to drink, intoxicate them, and practice pederasty upon them, as we state in Tractate Shabbath (149b). Another explanation. Woe to him who gives his friend to drink In Seder Olam, it [this verse] is expounded regarding Belshazzar, who gave

the princes to drink with the vessels of the Temple, because of which they were smitten with zaraath and intoxicated by the wrath of the Holy One, blessed be He. On that night he [Belshazzar] was slain.
upon their nakedness So that their disgrace be revealed, and their enemies see their disgrace.

Verse 16

and become clogged up The "he" serves in this word as an expression of the reflexive, as in (Deut. 32:50) "And you shall be gathered to your people." Here, too, הֵעָרֵל - you shall become clogged up with bewilderment and with astonishment of heart. Every expression of עָרְלָה is an expression of clogging, like (Jer. 6:10) "Their ear is clogged" and (Ezek 44:7) "Of clogged heart and of uncircumcised flesh." Jonathan rendered: And become naked, an expression of (ibid. 16:7) "Naked and bare."

Verse 17

the violence of the Lebanon the Temple.
and the plunder of cattle The plunder of your cattle, and your hordes that plundered My people Israel, shall break you.
because of the blood of man Because of the violence done to the blood of Israel.
and the violence of the land The land of Israel.
a city Jerusalem.

Verse 18

What did a graven image avail Babylon?
that the maker of his work trusted The man who formed it, who is the maker of this god of his.
in it He trusts in this creation of his, that it assists him, so he comes to make dumb idols.

Verse 19

Shall it teach? This is a question.

Verse 20

But the Lord is in His Holy Temple ready to exact retribution.
Silence the whole earth before Him הַס is an expression of silencing and the silence of destruction.

Chapter 3

Verse 1

concerning the errors This may be interpreted according to the Targum. However, according to the apparent meaning, Habakkuk is begging for mercy for himself because he spoke rebelliously: (1: 4) "Therefore Torah is slackened," and (verse 14) "You have made man like the fish of the sea." He criticized the Divine standard of justice.

Verse 2

I heard a report of You that from days of yore You always inflicted retribution upon those who provoked You, yet You tolerate this wicked man.
I feared I said, “How has the Divine standard of justice changed because of Israel’s iniquity?”
Your deed. In the midst of the years Your original deed, that You would wreak vengeance for us upon our enemies in the midst of the years of trouble in which we are found. revive it Awaken it and restore it. in the midst of the years And in the midst of these years let it be known.
In anger In the anger that You will vent upon the wicked, You will remember to have mercy.
to have mercy like לְרַחֵם, to have mercy.
You shall remember You shall remember to have mercy on Israel.

Verse 3

God The prophet now mentions before God His original deed, which he begs Him to revive - the deed of the love of Israel and the retribution of the first generations: When You came to give the Torah, You went around to Esau and Ishmael, and they did not accept it.
Teman Esau.
Paran Ishmael, as Scripture states (Gen. 21:21): “And he dwelt in the desert of Paran.”
His glory covered the heavens at Sinai for Israel.

Verse 4

And there was a brightness on that day.
like the light Like the special light of the seven days of Creation. So did Jonathan render it.
rays The expression of a light, which, when piercing and shining through a hole, appears like protruding horns. Similarly, (Ex. 34:29) “For the skin of his face shone.”
from His hand From the hand of the Holy One, blessed be He, they came to them.
and there was His strength hidden As the Targum renders: There His strength, which had previously been hidden, was revealed in the secret place of the Most High.

Verse 5

A pestilence went before Him I found in a Midrash Aggadah: At the time the Holy One, blessed be He, gave the Torah to Israel, He drove away the Angel of Death to divert him to other things, lest he stand to accuse and say, “You are giving the Torah to a nation that is destined to deny you at the end of forty days?”
and sparks went out at His feet Fiery angels came with Him to Sinai.

Verse 6

He stood and meted out to the earth He waited to examine minutely the case of the generation of the Flood, to mete out to them a measure for a measure, and He meted it out. “He stood” is to be understood in the sense of (Isa. 3: 13) “The Lord stands to plead, and He stands to judge the peoples.” He waits and examines their case minutely.
and meted out to the earth They sinned with heat, and they were judged with boiling water.
He saw the generation of separation, who, since they were of one language, all came upon the plan, as it is written (Gen. 11:1): “And all the earth was of one language.”

and caused nations to wander He caused them to jump into seventy languages as it is said (Lev. 11:21): "To jump with them on the earth," and (Job 37:1) "My heart trembles and jumps from its place."
the everlasting mountains The heavenly princes of the nations.
the procedures of the world are His He demonstrated to them that all the procedures of the world are His.

Verse 7

Because of iniquity that was found in Israel.
I saw the tents of Cushan standing in the open and inflicting injury upon Israel, and when they humbled themselves before you... the curtains... quaked All is to be understood according to the Targum.

Verse 8

Was... with the rivers? Some questions are in the affirmative. Have we seen that He performed all these? The explanation of the verse is according to the Targum.
Your chariots were salvation for us.

Verse 9

Your bow revealed itself Your might was revealed.
the oaths to the tribes The oaths that You swore to the tribes.
perpetual statement A statement that is to last forever. אֶמֶר is vowelized with a "pattah," [meaning a "seggol"] and the accent is on the first syllable, making it a noun.
You split the earth into rivers According to the Targum.

Verse 10

Mountains saw You and quaked The mountains of the streams of Arnon that cleft to one another.
A stream of water passed When they crossed the Jordan, the water was "completely cut off," and the flow of the stream of water passed downstream; the water "which came down from above stood and rose up."
The deep gave forth its voice The inhabitants of the land praised Him.
The heaven raised up its thanks The host of the heaven thanked Him.

Verse 11

stood in their dwellings in their dwellings. In every word that requires a "lammed" at the beginning - Scripture placed a "he" at the end [meaning "to"]. They explained the phrase as referring to the war of Gibeon, as the Targum paraphrases it.
to the light of Your arrows they go Israel.

Verse 12

With fury You tread the earth to drive out the seven nation [the heathens of Canaan].

Verse 13

to rescue Your anointed Saul and David.
uncovering it from the foundation The walls of their enemies.
to the neck The height of the walls and the towers.

Verse 14

You pierced the heads... with war clubs Sennacherib and his company. they storm Who were storming with a tempest to scatter me. [Sennacherib] was the staff with which you chastised the nations. When he came and stormed to scatter me, You pierced the heads of his troops with his staffs, with which he had come to chastise me.
the heads of his villages The heads of his towns and his castles, as in (Deut. 3:5) "The open towns" and (Zech. 2:8) "Jerusalem shall be inhabited without walls."
their joy was when they could... devour a poor one in secret Israel, known as a poor people.

Verse 15

You trampled in the sea You trampled upon [Sennacherib's] hordes, which were as heavy as the sand by the sea.
a heap of many waters Jonathan renders. upon a heap, an expression of (Exod. 8: 10) "many heaps."

Verse 16

I heard, and my inward parts trembled Jonathan rendered. Said Babylon, "I heard, and the kings trembled before the judgement meted out upon the Egyptians."
my lips quivered at the sound At the sound of the report, trembling took hold of me until my lips knocked one against the other and their sound was heard.
quivered An expression of (Zech. 14:20) "The bells of the horses." Tentir in O.F., to tinkle.
and I quaked in my place In my place, I quake.
that [the time] I would rest is destined for a day of trouble That this tranquility of mine is destined for a day of trouble.
to bring up a people that will troop back For the day that He said to bring up from there the people that He will cause to troop back, to return with its troops to its land.

Verse 17

For a fig tree shall not blossom As the Targum renders. However, the phrase may be interpreted according to its simple meaning: From now on, none of Babylon's deeds shall succeed.
the grain field a white field.
from the fold a stall for sheep.

Verse 18

Yet I the nation of Israel, will rejoice in the Lord.

Verse 19

To the conductor [to play] with my melodies To the Levite who conducts the music in the Temple. I will compose for him [the Levites' conductor] with my melodies, and the Levite[s] will accompany him with musical instruments.
To the conductor As it is stated (Ezra 3:8) "... appointed the Levites from twenty years old and upward to superintend the work of the house of the Lord."
with my melodies This is an expression of a vocal melody to raise and lower, orgenedors in O.F.